

# ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

---

The following errors in academic writing are very common. They have been listed here in order for the professor to reference to them in your writing. The professor can simply include the error number, so you can refer to this guide for a detailed explanation. Examples are in bold.

Terms in use:

**APA Style:** Stands for American Psychological Association writing style and was developed to assist reading comprehension. It is the only accepted style in business and academic writing. See the end of this document for a short-cut of the most common attributes of APA style.

**Complete sentence:** A clause that includes a subject and verb. It usually also includes an object. *She walked to the car.* She is the subject of the sentence, walked is the verb, car is the object.

**Compound sentence:** Two complete sentences joined into one.

**FANBOYS:** A collection of the most common conjunctions. It stands for the words For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, and So.

**Horizontal list:** A list that is in a sentence form, not in a bullet form. Each entry in a list is called an element of the list.

**Sentence order:** Generally sentences are written in SVO order. That is Subject, Verb, Object. Joan walked to the store. Joan in the subject, walked is the verb, and store is the object. Writing out of this order can make for more interesting variation, but can add confusion to subject-verb agreement and comma requirements.

**Vertical list:** A list that is in point or bullet form with each entry on its own line.

Error Number	Name	Explanation
1.	Conjunction comma	When a conjunction is used (see FANBOYS) to join 2 complete sentences together, a comma must be used to show the absence of the period to end one sentence and the capital letter to begin the next. <b>She was late, but he was waiting.</b> Both "She was late" and "he was waiting" are complete sentences. The word "but" is a conjunction. You need a comma before the conjunction.
2.	Comma splice	The opposite of error #1. When a conjunction is used to join a complete sentence to an incomplete sentence, the comma is NOT used because the incomplete sentence cannot exist on its own and must be attached to the complete sentence. No comma is needed. <b>She walked to the store and bought a turkey.</b> The phrase "bought a turkey" is not a complete sentence, so it cannot exist on its own. It must be attached to the complete sentence "She walked to the store." No comma is needed.
3.	Serial comma	In a horizontal list, due to the ever-increasing use of terms that are "something <u>and</u> something," it is not always possible for the reader to distinguish if the last 2 items are separate or together. So writers MUST include the last comma before the "and" (or the "or"). This is called a serial comma. <b>His choices included peanut butter and jelly, lox and bagels, and ham and eggs.</b> This clearly shows that "ham and eggs" is one option, not two (ham being one and eggs being another.) If the comma before "and ham" was missing, it would not be clear.

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

4.	Comma/period inside quotation marks	When a comma (or period) appears at the end of a quoted piece, it must always be placed INSIDE quotations marks. <b>Before I “take it over,” I need to study it first. She said she was “too busy tonight.”</b>
5.	Finding the Subject	Being sure of the actual subject of a sentence is important for a few things. So, how can you be sure? Find the verb (action word) in the sentence and ask this question: Who are what did this verb (action)? The answer will be the subject of the sentence. <b>Bill hit the ball.</b> The action word is “hit.” Who hit the ball? Bill did. Bill is the subject of the sentence. <b>The ball was hit by Bill.</b> Ask that magic question, “Who or what did the verb?” Here, what was hit by Bill? The ball was hit. The ball is the subject, not Bill. Active and passive sentence are determined this way. If the subject of the sentence (in the first example it was Bill) did the action (he did), it is active. If the subject of the sentence (in the second example, the ball) received the action (it did), then it is passive. Business and academic writing wants active sentences. This is so important, that MS Word’s readability statistics warn us how many passive sentences are being used.
6.	Subject-Verb agreement	If the subject of the sentence is singular, the verb (and pronouns) used relating to it must agree. If you are talking about a company, that is a singular thing and cannot correctly be referred to as “they” or “their.” Use “it” and “its.” <b>Sears has been doing this for years. They hire only tall people.</b> This is wrong. Sears is a company, not a group. It should say <b>Sears has been doing this for years. It hires only tall people.</b> See how using the correct subject (it) now changes the verb (hire) from the plural “hire” to the singular “hires.” <b>When a student needs help, they call home.</b> That is wrong. “A student” is a singular thing. Why would “they” (plural) call home? This situation creates the “he or she” (singular) pronoun. This is awkward, so rewrite the subject to plural, and leave “they” in place. <b>When students need help, they call home.</b>
7.	Introductory clauses	When a statement is used to introduce a sentence, (just like I’ve done here) if the statement is 5 words or more, (as I have done again) it should be followed by a comma. <b>Before we saw the movie, we knew it would be good.</b> The “before we saw the movie” introduces the rest of the sentence, but the actual subject of the sentence is “we.” This is done to avoid confusion and to show that the sentence is not written in the normal order (see sentence order).
8.	Unneeded words	Words that are not needed in the sentence. The word “that” is very often added to a sentence, but not needed. We also tend to add prepositions to the ends of sentences. <b>“What time is the meeting at?” “What did you find out?”</b> The words “at” and “out” are not needed, and are considered improper.

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

9.	<p>Parenthetical phrases also interrupters or insertions. These terms are, while technically different, almost interchangeable.</p>	<p>When a phrase in a sentence can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence, it must be encased in commas. The reverse is also true: If a phrase in a sentence is surrounded by commas, it must be able to be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence. <b>My brother, who is very tall, did not see the sign.</b> The phrase “who is very tall” tells you more about my brother but is not vital to the meaning. The sentence says that my brother did not see the sign. The “who is very tall” can be removed without changing the meaning.</p>
10.	<p>Appositives</p>	<p>Similar to the above, we sometimes interrupt our sentence with additional information. While these are not always placed in commas (they certainly could be) you should “mentally” remove them to ensure the subject-verb agreement is correct. <b>Us students decided to have a keg party.</b> The word “us” is further explained by the word students; however, since you would not say, <b>Us decided to have a keg party,</b> you would change “us” to “we.” Then you can return the word “students” to the sentence is you wish. <b>We students decided to have a keg party</b> is correct.</p>
11.	<p>To avoid confusion</p>	<p>Commas can be added if they are required to avoid confusion. <b>She waited a long, long time.</b> This leaves no confusion about the repeated word. <b>When I was about to begin the speech ended.</b> This likely has to be re-read to make sense. That is not good writing. This should be written as, <b>When I was about to begin, the speech ended.</b></p>
12.	<p>Direct address, salutation</p>	<p>When you are writing (or addressing) directly to someone, you must set his or her name off inside commas. <b>It was clear, Dave, that you had the right answer.</b> A comma is not used if you are talking about someone else. <b>It was clear Dave had the right answer.</b> This is also one of the reasons a comma is NEVER correct in the salutation of a letter. The <b>Dear Brian,</b> is followed by a blank line, a new paragraph, and a capital letter. What comma rule allows for that? If you were arguing that the <b>Dear Brian</b> was part of a direct address (since the letter is written directly to him), then you would have to put a comma in front of the word “Brian,” as well as eliminate the new paragraph, the capital letter, etc. In professional writing, only a colon is used in the salutation. To be safe, never use anything else.</p>
13.	<p>Colons :</p>	<p>A colon is often used before a list, but it can only be used only after a complete sentence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Please bring the following: ice, beer, cards.</b></p> <p>It doesn’t matter whether the list is horizontal or vertical. If the sentence is incomplete, a colon is incorrect.</p> <p>A colon can also be used to follow a word or statement when it is being used to signify a formal command or list. <b>Be aware: Don’t use colons unless you know how.</b></p>

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

<p>14. Quotation marks Always use double quotation marks “ ”</p>	<p>Put quotes around the actual words someone said or wrote. <b>Dave said, “We are missing it all.”</b></p> <p>Use quotes to set off special terms such as slang, technical language, and new terminology the first time they are used. <b>He entered the “primal chase” zone.</b></p> <p>Use single quotes ONLY when you are quoting something inside existing double quotes. <b>Dave said, “The report talked about ‘quantum singularities’ and their effects on us.”</b></p> <p>If a sentence like the one above ends with the single quotes, then you close the double quotes, too. <b>Dave said, “The report talked about ‘quantum singularities.’”</b></p>
<p>15. Question marks and quotes</p>	<p>The question mark appears inside the quotes ONLY if the question is in the quoted material. <b>Dave said, “Who did this?”</b></p> <p>If the sentence itself is a question, then the question mark appears outside the quotes. <b>Who will be “the last one standing”?</b></p> <p>NOTE: You do not use a period after a sentence that ends with a question mark inside the quotes.</p>
<p>16. Semi-colons ;</p>	<p>Used to show that something has been removed. It could be punctuation (like a period) or maybe a word. <b>She came to the game; she wouldn’t miss it for anything.</b> The semi-colon shows that the 2 sentences are so closely related, you have chosen to remove the period between them.</p> <p>A semi-colon is also used when a conjunctive adverb (an adverb being used to join 2 sentences) is used. <b>He was late; however, the game was not yet decided.</b> The semi-colon, again, shows that the period has been removed. The conjunctive adverb ties the 2 sentences together, but must have a comma after it. NOTE: the semi-colon will only appear if both sentences are complete. <b>He was, however, not sure of the time.</b> The word “however” is not joining 2 complete sentences. The clause “He was” is not a complete sentence. In this case the word “however” can be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning.</p> <p>A semi-colon is also used in place of the commas in a horizontal list that already contains commas within the elements. This avoids confusion. <b>I saw George Brown, president, UHT; Sharon Novel, CEO, Arthur James; James Russell, Advert; and Nicole Swanson, HR rep, Invix.</b> In this sentence, there are commas already existing in the elements of the list. So, the commas that would be used to separate the elements themselves are replaced by semi-colons. Notice that the company Arthur James comes before someone named James. This would be totally confusing without the semi-colons.</p>

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

17.	Pluralizing	<p>You add an “s” to words to show it is plural. The exception is if the word ends in a “Y” but has no vowel before the “Y.”</p> <p>Truck becomes trucks (just add the “S”)</p> <p>Monkey becomes monkeys (just add the “S” because the letter before the “Y” is a vowel)</p> <p>Company becomes companies (drop the “Y” and add “IES” when the letter before the “Y” is a NOT a vowel) NOTE: This is taught in Grade 3 and will be marked harshly.</p>
18.	Possessive words	<p>Add an apostrophe to show that something belongs to a noun or pronoun. <b>It was the dog’s dish.</b> This shows the dish belonged to one dog. If there is more than one dog owning the object, then pluralize it first, then add the “S.” <b>It was the dogs’ dish.</b> This shows that the dish belonged to more than one dog. The apostrophe is NEVER used to show plural. <b>There were three company’s involved in the sale.</b> This is incorrect. It should be, <b>There were three companies involved in the sale.</b> If the possessive thing belongs to more than one company, it should be expressed this way, <b>The companies’ policies were all the same.</b> This shows that it is more than one company that had the same policies. NOTE: This is taught in Grade 3 and will be marked harshly.</p>
19.	Reflective pronoun	<p>Pronouns that end in “self” MUST have an antecedent occurring earlier in the sentence. That means that you cannot use words like “myself” unless <u>you</u> are referred to earlier in the same sentence. <b>I walked in and hurt myself.</b> The antecedent is “I,” the reflective pronoun is “myself.” It is incorrect to say, <b>You can give the report to James or to myself.</b> You should use “me.”</p> <p>This is common among those who are trying to sound more intelligent than they are. The problem is, the very people they are trying to impress know better and are not impressed.</p>
20.	Uncertain antecedent	<p>Avoid confusing pronouns. It must be clear to whom or what you are referring when you use “they” “her” and other pronouns.</p> <p><b>Susan gave Betty the promotion. Now she is not sure what to do.</b> Is “she” referring to Susan or to Betty? <b>The sales team followed Wal-Mart’s model. Now it is trying to change.</b> Who is trying to change? The sales team or Wal-Mart?</p>

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

21.	Parallel structure	<p>Make sure your sentences (especially lists) all follow the same grammatical construction. When you list things, they <b>MUST</b> be in the same form. <b>I like fishing, skiing, and to bake.</b> This should be written <b>I like fishing, skiing, and baking.</b> All the elements of the list end in “ing.” If your list follows a “lead-in sentence,” each element should complete the sentence properly. <b>It is important to use the right temperature, close the oven completely, watching the timer closely.</b> This sentence should be checked by using each element of the list to complete the lead-in of “<u>It is important to...use the right temperature.</u>” That’s good. “<u>It is important to...close the oven completely.</u>” That’s good. “<u>It is important to...watching the timer closely.</u>” That is wrong, it does not make sense. It should be changed to “<u>It is important to...watch the timer closely.</u>” Another situation to consider is this: <b>The printer works quietly and quick.</b> That should be written <b>The printer works quietly and quickly.</b> Both quietly and quickly are adverbs describing the verb “works.”</p>
22.	Comparisons	<p>While it sounds strange to some, the following sentence is correct. <b>She is a better typist that I.</b> That is because the sentence is not actually finished. It should read, <b>She is a better typist than I am.</b> Just because you drop the word “am,” doesn’t mean you can change the word “I” to “me.” “She is a better typist than me” is very wrong. Hint: If you think it sounds too formal, then don’t drop the last word. If you say, “She is a better than typist than I am,” no attention will drawn to the fact that you are being correct.</p>
23.	You and I – You and Me Him and her – She and he, Etc.	<p>An easy way to make the grammar correct without learning rules is to simply make each element correct on its own, then put them both back in the sentence. <b>He gave the report to Terry and I.</b> That sounds good, but it is wrong. Try each element separately. <b>He gave the report to Terry.</b> That works just fine. <b>He gave the report to I.</b> That clearly shows it is wrong. It should be “<b>He gave the report to me.</b>” So put them both back into the sentence and you have, “<b>He gave the report to Terry and me.</b>” This is correct. Try it with anything. <b>Him and his friends were late.</b> Would you say, “Him was late”? No, so say, “<b>He and his friends were late.</b>” How about this one. “<b>Me and her saw the fireworks.</b>” Only Tarzan would say “Me saw the fireworks.” So you know this is wrong. Notice in this sentence that, “Her saw the fireworks,” is also wrong. So the correct sentence would be, “<b>She and I saw the fireworks.</b>” When given a chance, always put the other person first and yourself last (She and I, not I and She).</p>

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

24.	Who or whom	<p>Don't get caught up in subjective, objective, nominative and all that. Try this. Consider the sentence that has the "who" in it. <b>"Who do I speak to when I get there?"</b> Answer in a complete sentence using the male pronouns "He or Him." For example; answer that question this way, <b>"You would speak to him."</b> You would not say, "You would speak to he." Notice that the correct answer (him) has an "m" at the end of it? That reminds you that the "who" in the question must also have an "m" at the end of it. So that would be, <b>"Whom do I speak to when I get there?"</b> It works every time. Be sure to answer the "who" question in a complete and proper sentence. Try it again. <b>"Who said I was an idiot?"</b> Answer: <b>"He said you were an idiot."</b> "He" has no "m" at the end of it, so the "who" word should not have an "m" at the end of it either. The sentence is correct as it is.</p>
25.	Nonsense	<p>In writing, this term does not mean that the reader does not believe what you are saying, but rather than the sentence does not make grammatical sense (non-sense).</p>
26.	Hyphens (compound adjectives)	<p>As a general rule, when you are using two words to create one description of a noun, you must join them with a hyphen if used in front of the noun. Such as <b>first-year course</b>. Both the words "first" and "year" are needed to create one attribute that describes the course. Check this by asking if the 2 words could be joined with the word "and." Is the course a first and year course? No; so hyphenate the words into one word. How about <b>"Young-sweet girl."</b> Is the girl young and sweet? Yes. Do not use a hyphen. You will begin to see that young and sweet are 2 separate attributes of the girl and are not joined by a hyphen. If the words that would normally appear hyphenated appear <u>after</u> the word, they are not hyphenated. <b>That course was in my first term.</b> Here the word "first" simply describes the "term," not the word course.</p>
27.	Capitalization	<p>Do not capitalize without a reason. The word "I" is ALWAYS capitalized. NOTE: This was taught in Grade 1, and will not be tolerated in college. <b>Proper names</b> of nouns are capitalized. Such as Jim, Okanagan College, and Department of Justice. The word college is not capitalized unless it is part of the actual name of a specific college. <b>Days of the week</b> are always capitalized, but the <b>seasons</b> (spring, fall, etc.) are not. The term Western Canada is a specific part of Canada, so it is capitalized, but traveling west is not capitalized because it is a general direction. Do you capitalize the word "internet"? There is a hot debate among grammar scholars. No one has identified a clear answer at this time. So the longer the argument goes on, the more likely it will become a common word. When I use the word, I am referring to a rather non-specific thing, so I would argue that it should not be capitalized, but that is just me.</p>

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

---

28.	Numbers	Basic rule is to write 10 and under as words. The rest are written as digits. The biggest exception is if the numbers are related—then go with the format of the largest number in the sentence (or paragraph). <b>Of the 32 students, 5 were absent.</b> Since the 5 students come from the 32 students, and since we will write 32 as a digit (because it is over 10), we will write 5 as a digit, too. If it read <b>After 27 surveys we found eight people refused.</b> The number 8 relates to people, while the number 27 relates to surveys. They are not related to each other. Numbers that start a sentence <b>MUST</b> be written in words. So, a general rule to remember: Re-write your sentence to avoid starting with a multi-word number. <b>Three hundred and twenty-seven people were killed.</b> This is correct, but awkward and reduces the impact of the number. So it should be re-written <b>Today 327 were killed.</b> It is easier to write and easier to read.
29.	Random punctuation	Sometimes commas or semi-colons appear where they do not belong. All punctuation has structural purpose and can change the meaning of a sentence when misused. Most of the reasons have been described in other parts of the AWE list. Commas are clearly the most often misused. Sometimes they just appear for no particular reason. The old rule for punctuation: <b>When in doubt, leave it out.</b> So, if you can't find a reason for adding a comma, it is likely because there isn't a reason, so don't add one.
30.	Change in Person or Voice	Most academic and business writing is done in “third-person” narrative (sometimes called voice or point of view). It is deemed the most professional because it distances the writer from personal feelings and instead places emphasis on the evidence and thereby presenting a more credible tone. Rather than: <b>I feel this shows...</b> Third Person might say: <b>the evidence indicates...or research has shown...</b> <u>First Person:</u> I went to the store. I could see the new products were there. <u>Second Person:</u> You went to the store. You could see the new products were there. <u>Third Person:</u> Dave went to the store. He could see the new products were there.

## Confusing Words

**Affect/Effect** – Affect is a verb that means “to influence.” Effect is a noun that means a “result”

(outcome, consequence, or appearance). So: **“This will affect the way we do things.”** Affect is correct because it is saying “it” will influence (“do something to”—which is a verb) the way we do things. Try the following, perhaps they will help:

“The effect was more people drinking beer.” Is it a verb? Test it by replacing the word with “do something to.” **The “do something to” was more people drinking.** No, it is not a verb. Is it a noun? Test it with the word “outcome.” The “outcome” was more people drinking beer. Yes, it is a noun, so use “effect.”

“Will it effect the score?” Verb? Will it “do something to” the score? Verb? Yes. So use “affect” not “effect.”

Remember, the substitutes only have to make sense grammatically. Don’t worry if the sentence doesn’t make sense.

**A lot/Allot** – **“There are a lot of people at the party.”** **“The agency will allot funding to each program.”**

In the first sentence “a lot” means many. In the second, “allot” means to dispense or assign.

**Bring/Take** – This depends on the position of the speaker. Brings means action toward the speaker, and take means action away from the speaker. **“Can you bring the glass to me?”** **“Can you take this glass to your father?”** It also works for things such as **“Why not take (not bring) your mother to the mall with you?”** Bring would only be correct if the speaker were already at the mall.

**Everyday/Every day** – Everyday means a ho-hum, nothing special kind of thing. **“Rain is an everyday occurrence here.”** **“These are my everyday clothes.”** Every day means each and every day. **“It seems to rain every day.”** **“Every day I have to decide what to wear.”**

**Everyone/Every one** – Everyone means “all.” Every one means “each individual.” **So consider:**

**“Everyone likes Star Trek.”** This means all people. **“He watched every one of the episodes.”**

**Further/Farther** – Further means to a greater extent but cannot be measured. Farther means past where it is (or more than it was), but can be measured. So consider: **“We can discuss this further, tomorrow.”** You can’t measure a discussion, so further is correct. **“I can’t walk any farther.”** You can measure how far you’ve walked and how far you may walk, so farther is correct.

**Fewer/Less**— Fewer is used when it is something that could be counted. Less is used when it cannot be counted—thus “count nouns” and “mass nouns.” As a rule, count nouns are easy to spot because they are plural. Mass nouns are singular. So **“There were fewer people at the event”** is correct as the number of people could be counted (and people is a plural word). **“It was less fun than the last time”** is correct because you can’t count fun (and fun is singular—you can’t count how many “funs” you had).

**Good/Well** – Good is an adjective; it describes a noun. **“He is a good student.”** The word good describes the word student (a noun). **“He does well in this class.”** Well is an adverb that describes how he “does.” Does is a verb, so it needs an adverb to describe it. Try this:

**“How are you doing?”** **“Well.”** Because you were asked how you were doing. Doing is a verb.

**“How are you?”** **“Good.”** Because you were asked how you are. You are a noun.

It is also confused sometimes with the question of health. You are either ill or well, but that is rarely used because people are rarely asking about your health.

**Into/In to** – The word “into” describes where. **“I walked into the room.”** Into is a preposition describing the relationship between the two nouns (I and room). The words “in to” describe why. **“I walked in to pick up my keys.”** The word “to” is part of a verb. In this case, the verb “to pick.”

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

---

- It/It's** – The only time you use “it’s” is when it substitutes for the words “it is.” If it is not standing in for those 2 words, then use “its.” There are no exceptions.
- Lay/Lie** – Chickens lay eggs, but only a human can lie. That works in most cases. Lay means to place something. **“I will lay this book on the table.”** Lie (in this case) means to recline. **“I need to lie down for a few minutes.”** If you can’t use the word “place,” then you should not use lay.
- Me and I**—I and me should be easy, but they are often used incorrectly. “I” is first-person voice and relates to you doing something: “I got lost in the forest.” It’s obvious to most that “me” doesn’t work there. “Getting lost in the forest really scared me.” Again, obvious, but examine why they aren’t interchangeable. “I” is used as the subject of the sentence (it used to be called the subjective form, now, for some reason, it is called the nominative form) as it shows “I” doing something (getting lost). But the subject in the second sentence is “getting lost” (still referred to as the objective form) and what it did to an object—namely me. If you have a sentence such as “Terry and I went to the beach:” remove the other person and make it correct with just you in the sentence—“I went to the beach” is correct, not “me went to the beach.” Try this one: “You can drop it off to either David or I.” Again, take the other person out of the sentence to check for correctness. “You can drop it off to I?” Certainly not, “me” is the correct word as both David and you are objects that are receiving some action.
- Myself**—It is currently one of the most misused words. It has become the “irregardless” of our time. That is, those who tried to sound refined and learned by using big words used the word “irregardless.” That is not even a real word. The proper word is “regardless.” It stuck out so much that it showed the speaker really was not refined or learned, in fact they were the opposite. Now we have people trying to sound inclusive and kind by changing or softening “me” to “myself.” Again, those of us who know how to use it cringe when the unrefined and unlearned misuse it. Simply, if you can use “me,” then it is correct to use. Myself (and all other “reflective pronouns” such as himself, herself, ourselves, etc.) can only be used if they are referring to a noun (or pronoun) already used in the same sentence (it’s called an antecedent). So that gives us this: “I walked into the room and hurt myself.” “Myself” is correct because “I” appears earlier in the same sentence. Any other use of “self words” is wrong and it makes you sound pretentious and phony. “You can give myself a call.” Urgh!! “Just give me a call.”
- Passed/Past** – Passed needs something to do the passing. It is a verb. **“He passed the test.” “I passed her in the hallway.”** Both “he” and “I” did the passing action. Past is a little fuzzy at times. **“She lives in the past.”** That’s easy; past is a noun there. **“Just past the door is a button.”** Since there is no “thing” to pass anything here, then “past” is correct. It is an adverb. **“He forgot his past failures.”** Here past is an adjective. Remember that “passed” is a verb (action word). When it is anything else, use “past.”
- Than/Then** – Than is always used in comparing things. **“She was faster than he was.”** Then means “next.” **“We studied hard, then we passed our exams.”**
- That/Which** – When the clause you are adding to a sentence is vital to the meaning (called a restrictive clause), then use “that.” If the clause is just more information (called a non-restrictive clause), then use “which.” Generally, the “which” clause will be inside commas. **Cars that are red scare me.** The “that are red” is vital to the meaning of the sentence—removing it would change the sentence (“Cars scare me” is wrong. Only red ones do). **Cars, which can be almost any size, have really come down in price.** The “which” clause can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence. “Cars have really come down in price.”
- There/They’re** – This is easy to remember because “they’re” is only used to substitute for the words “they are.” Everything else is “there.”

## ACADEMIC WRITING ERRORS - THE AWE LIST

---

- There/Their** – The first one is (usually) a place such as “over there” or “here and there.” You can remember it because the word “here” is actually inside it. However, there are many other uses for “there” (as in this sentence), so it may be easier to remember the other word. “Their” is only a possessive pronoun. **It was their luggage.** “Their” has no other purpose, so when you are talking about something that belongs to a group, use “their.” For anything else use “there.”
- Were/We’re** – The word “we’re” only stands in for the words “we are.” **“We’re going to the game tonight.”** The other word is an adverb. **“There were a dozen eggs on the table.” “Were you thinking of leaving.”**
- Whose/Who’s** – Whose is a possessive word. **“Whose book is this?”** The word “who’s” only substitutes for the words “who is.” **“Who’s coming to the show?”**
- Your/You’re** – The word “your” is a possession word meaning something belongs to you. **“This is your chance.”** The word “you’re” is a contraction of the words “you are.” **“You’re not going to believe this one.”** You’re only substitutes for “you are.”

## APA style highlights<sup>1</sup>:

- Times New Roman font
- 12-point size
- Double-spacing including references, appendixes, and footnotes.
- Indent paragraphs
- No blank lines between paragraphs
- Leave right margins ragged – do NOT justify text
- Two (2) spaces after periods
- Footnotes are only permissible for content explanation (references are at the end of the document)
- Citations are in-line and include at least the author and date (often page number)
- One inch margins (on all sides)
- Page numbers on right side (top or bottom is personal choice)
- Title page is considered page 1
- Quotations over 40 words should be presented in its own paragraph with justified text (without quotations marks) with both margins indented 5 spaces
- Reference section begins on new page
- References follow APA format and should include hanging indentation
- Titles for tables goes on top of the table (remember Table on Top; T and T)
- Titles for figures goes below the figure
- Each appendix opens on a separate page
- All spelling will be in Canadian English, unless quoting someone else's work

---

<sup>1</sup> Updated from American Psychological Association website January, 2013: <http://www.apastyle.org/>